

THE PERMANENCY PLANNER

Michigan Foster Care Review Board Program

Supporting safe and timely permanency through review, advocacy, and collaboration.

Summer 2006



17TH ANNUAL KINSHIP ADOPTION FESTIVAL

**Saturday, September 9, 2006 - 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Belle Isle Casino, Detroit, MI**

CHILDREN AWAITING ADOPTIVE HOMES NEED YOUR HELP (Today)

In Michigan, there are approximately 4,000 children in foster care who are available for adoption, and about 50 percent of them are from the Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb county area. The Kinship Adoption Festival is the largest single event in the state that recruits potential adoptive families for the children in this area who wait for permanent homes.

The Kinship Coalition of Detroit is a collaborative network of 26 private and public adoption agencies in the Detroit metropolitan area. The individuals and organizations involved volunteer their time, services, resources, and money to put on the event. The primary goal of the coalition is to find loving and stable families for the many foster children who need permanent homes.

The Kinship Coalition of Detroit began hosting an annual adoption festival in 1989 to educate and recruit adoptive families for children in foster care, while providing a fun and informal atmosphere where waiting children and prospective adoptive families could interact. The hope was that if people could have personal contact with a child, they would be more likely to express an interest in adopting. Agency representatives are present to answer questions the families may have about the adoption process.

Each year the festival attracts upwards of 500 people, most of them families looking to adopt. Additionally, about 100 adoption-eligible children attend, and most of them are school age or older. Last year, about one-third of the children who attended the event left with at least one family having inquired about them. To date, eight of these children have been matched with a family as a direct result of The Kinship Adoption Festival!

One such success story is that of 14-year old Johnnie and his mom, Mildred Roberts. Mildred drove to the event from the Lansing area and was thinking about adopting a school-age girl. She was approached by an adoption worker, who engaged her in a lively conversation about a child she was recruiting for named Johnnie. Upon meeting the teenager, Mildred was taken by his sense of humor and candid smile and decided to pursue adoption.

The Kinship Adoption Festival is *entirely* dependent on donations and volunteers. In-kind donations are also appreciated. Donations of items such as pre-packaged food, supplies for children's arts and crafts, small toys for gift bags, etc., are always appreciated, along with volunteers to help out the day of the event!

No donation is too small when it comes from the heart.

For more information about how you can help, please contact Kirsta Grapentine of the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at 1-800-589-6273.

----- FOSTER CARE SUMMIT PROMOTES CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT -----

By Jim Novell

May 4, 2006, was a very special day for the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) and for the cause of citizen involvement in the state foster care system. Almost 100 citizen volunteers, as well as key child welfare leaders and legislators, enthusiastically lent their support and voice to this event. The summit highlighted the need for, and benefit of, well-trained and informed citizen volunteers to support and advocate for the needs of an overburdened, under-resourced system that is responsible for the care and well-being of Michigan's most vulnerable and voiceless population of children. The event was hosted by State Representative John Stewart (R-Plymouth) and was entitled "The Citizen's Perspective on the State's Foster Care System." The intent of the summit was to confirm to our legislators the value of citizen participation in the process of facilitating safe and timely permanency for children in foster care, to advise them of the critical needs within the state foster care system, and to stress the importance of allocating sufficient monetary resources to ensure the experience of foster care for an abused or neglected child is truly beneficial.

The summit consisted of an assembly with presentations by citizen volunteers from the FCRB and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), as well as key professionals from the child welfare community. Subsequently, personal meetings were held between the citizen volunteers and legislators from their respective districts. Key professional speakers included Verlie Ruffin, Children's Ombudsman; Mary Chaliman, Foster Care Program Manager, Department of Human Services; Richard Bearup, Director of the Michigan Children's Trust Fund; Amy Hartman, Attorney from the Michigan Children's Law Center; Patricia Wagner, CASA Director; Alma Schmidt from the Michigan Association for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents; Jim Novell, Program Manager, Foster Care Review Board Program; and Carol Siemon, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Services Division of the State Court Administrative Office. Ms. Siemon presented written correspondence received from the Honorable Michael Anderegg, Marquette County Probate Court, and the Honorable Leslie Kim Smith, Third Circuit Court Family Division, expressing their support for citizen review and identifying urgent needs within the foster care system.

Both the citizens and professionals spoke with one voice regarding the value of citizen involvement in helping to ensure safe and timely permanency for children in the foster care system and the need for a more significant and responsible commitment of state resources to serve children and families involved in that system.

---- EXCERPTS FROM THE SUMMIT ----

"In general, the Review Board finds the foster care system in the State of Michigan to be in the capable hands of dedicated, hardworking professionals, foster parents, and citizen advocates who, with a few exceptions, work passionately and diligently to protect and care for children unfortunate enough to come into this system. The Review Board has observed that in the majority of cases we review, these efforts appear to be having a beneficial impact on the lives of these children, despite limited resources and a bureaucratic structure that is not always child and family friendly. Unfortunately, a "majority of cases" is not good enough when we are dealing with the lives of Michigan's most vulnerable children and their families.

*High caseloads in both the court and foster care agencies, and high caseworker turnover related to the stresses inherent in this type of work, as well as the need for state-of-the-art training, continue to plague efforts to ensure the safety, well-being, and timely permanency for **all** children in the foster care system. These same factors also appear to be impacting Michigan's ability to comply with federal funding requirements for foster care payment, which in turn may reduce the already limited resources available to adequately care for this vulnerable and voiceless population of children."*

**Jim Novell, Program Manager
Foster Care Review Board**



"Our Foster Care Review Board system is one we can be proud of. It is ably administered by the staff of the Child Welfare Services Division in the State Court Administrative Office and is served by well-trained, committed citizen volunteers who do their very best to ensure that each child under the court's jurisdiction receives a safe and stable permanent placement as rapidly as possible.

**Honorable Michael J. Anderegg
Probate Judge/Presiding Judge**

"Citizen involvement in the foster care system helps to promote a degree of consistency and incubates an atmosphere of stability in dealing with the foster care system. In my estimation, the Foster Care Review Board serves as a compass to the needs and wants of the community as it relates to the foster care system. It is a valuable source of citizen input and, at times, a channel for constructive criticism in relationship to the court's action in cases where children are placed in foster care."

Hon. Leslie Kim Smith
3rd Circuit Court Family Division



"Today is a perfect opportunity to not only recognize the merits of the Foster Care Review Board Program and its expert professional staff, but, most importantly, to commend the many citizen volunteers across the state who spend many hours reviewing cases and making recommendations to improve this system for children. The Foster Care Review Board Program is a value-added part of the foster care system in that it involves citizens whose only vested interest is to make sure that the needs of children are being met."

Verlie Ruffin,
Children's Ombudsman

----- FOSTER CARE SUMMIT: ONE CITIZEN'S PERSPECTIVE -----

by Kathryn Bangs (Board #28)

It was a beautiful afternoon on May 4, 2006, and citizen volunteers from all over the state convened at the Capitol in Lansing to personally address our legislators regarding our assessment of the state of children's foster care in Michigan. A very enthusiastic and supportive Representative John Stewart graciously hosted the event, which highlighted the value of citizen participation and oversight of our state foster care system. Representative Stewart and Program Manager Jim Novell welcomed all and got the program started on a very positive note. We were pleasantly surprised by how many of our state legislators or their aides were present for the formal program and appreciated their willingness to take time from their busy schedules to attend the event.

The summit brought together citizen volunteers and professionals from the foster care community who spoke with one voice to our legislators about the value of citizen participation and the needs of the system. We emphasized that in order to be successful in securing the rights of children in foster care, the system must work efficiently and effectively to ensure the safety, well-being, and timely permanency of all children unfortunate enough to have come into foster care.

Legislators present at the assembly and those who met privately with citizen volunteers were asked to do everything in their power to ensure adequate resources are provided for the foster care system. Our hope is that we were successful in bringing attention to the plight of children in foster care and to the needs and issues facing the system established by the legislature to care for them.

This event also provided an opportunity for citizen volunteers and professionals from the foster care system to express mutual support, respect, and appreciation for each other. Review board members experienced a sense of renewed energy and inspiration when our efforts and insights were acknowledged as essential to an efficient and effective foster care system.

As an experienced and informed board member, I believe it is imperative that our local boards continue to meet with their legislators in Lansing or in their district offices to keep them informed of the needs of foster children in our communities and hold them accountable to act to address those needs. Child welfare professionals, concerned citizens, and informed legislators working together are the only hope Michigan has for a foster care system that is all it can and must be in order to benefit the children and families it serves in a timely manner.

----- LEGISLATIVE DAY - MAY 2006 -----



The staff and citizen volunteers of the Foster Care Review Board would like to express our deepest appreciation to the legislators and the professionals from the child welfare community who participated in Legislative Day on May 4, 2006. A special thank you goes out to Representative John Stewart and his staff for initiating this memorable event and extending their gracious hospitality.

*Special thanks to Ruth
Richard (Board 29) for
capturing this event on film!*



***Representative John Stewart greets citizen volunteers on
the Capitol House floor.***



It is our sincere hope that other legislators will step forward in the near future to initiate similar events so that we can continue to openly and honestly evaluate our state's foster care system and work together to ensure our most vulnerable children are being well served by all branches of state government.



LEGISLATORS OR AIDES IN ATTENDANCE

REPRESENTATIVES

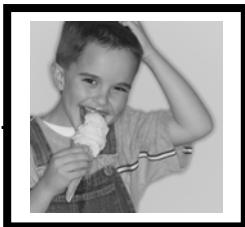
Richard Ball (R)	District 85
Bruce Caswell (R)	District 58
Brenda Clack (D)	District 34
Paul Condino (D)	District 35
Kevin Elsenheimer (R)	District 105
Scott Hummel (R)	District 93
Kathleen Law (D)	District 23
Gabe Leland (D)	District 10
Alexander C. Lipsey (D)	District 60
Leslie Mortimer (R)	District 65
Neal Nitz (R)	District 78
David Palsrok (R)	District 101
John Proos (R)	District 79
Rick Shaffer (R)	District 59
John Stewart (R)	District 20

SENATORS

Raymond Basham (D)	District 8
Liz Brater (D)	District 18
Cameron Brown (R)	District 16
Valde Garcia (R)	District 22
Gilda Jacobs (D)	District 14
Ron Jelinek (R)	District 21
Bruce Patterson (R)	District 7
Alan Sanborn (R)	District 11
Tony Stamas (R)	District 36
Michael Switalski (D)	District 10
Buzz Thomas (D)	District 4
Gerald Van Woerkom (R)	District 34

***** SAVE THE DATE *****

The annual FCRB Training Conference will be November 2nd & 3rd in Mt. Pleasant!



----- NEWS FROM THE FRONTLINE -----
Children's Placement Network
By Stephanie Miller



Wayne County Department of Human Services is currently piloting the Children's Placement Network (CPN), a formalized and systematic child-centered, neighborhood-based foster home placement system with a goal of making every child's placement the best, most stable placement possible. On April 17, 2006, the CPN replaced the Family Assignment System that was previously used by Wayne County DHS and its' private child placement agency partners. All agencies providing services to Wayne County families are part of the placement network.

The Family Assignment System was developed in the mid-1980s as a rotational child placement system. Agencies received a percentage of placements based on each agency's number of licensed foster homes. When an agency came up on rotation, there was no option to refuse the child for placement. Agencies benefited from this system as they were guaranteed placements. DHS benefited from this "must take" approach by being able to secure placements for even the more demanding, difficult-to-place children.

There were drawbacks to the rotational system, however. Each time a child needed a placement, the pool of homes to choose from was only as large as the number of available homes from the rotation agency. The placement decision was vacancy-driven, and the agency could look only where there might be available beds. Children were rarely able to remain in their own neighborhoods. Approximately two out of every three sibling groups coming into care were split. Very little information about the child was being provided to the foster parent at time of placement, often resulting in a poor match between the needs of the child and services available from the foster home. Data going back to 2001 indicates that children coming into care experienced an average of almost three foster home placements during the first 365 days in foster care.

In January 2005, as part of the child welfare reform effort in Wayne County, a team comprised of DHS managers, front line staff, foster parents, and private agency staff was charged with developing a child-centered, neighborhood-based placement system. The team established placement priorities for out-of-home placements from the child's perspective. Placement with a suitable relative or court-ordered placement with a suitable caregiver is preferred if a child cannot safely remain in his or her own home. If a suitable family member or caregiver is not available to provide care for the child or youth when he or she enters the system, then the priorities for placement are as follows:

- (a) Available positive previous placement (relative care/foster care);
- (b) Siblings placed together in own neighborhood;
- (c) Siblings placed together but not in own neighborhood;
- (d) Siblings separated (although no sibling placed alone) in own neighborhood;
- (e) Siblings separated and not placed in own neighborhood.

A placement recommendation from a Wayne County DHS-facilitated team may establish a case-specific exception to the placement priorities.

A child profile database was devised to gather and preserve information about the child to help the Wayne County DHS Placement Resource Unit (PRU) identify a better match with the foster parents. The specialists in the PRU complete a child profile using an interview process. Information obtained through the interview process with Child Protective Services and the foster care worker is recorded in the database, generally following the Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting. This meeting, drawn from the Family-to-Family model, is required whenever a child is removed from the parental home or other change of placement is necessary. Participants may include birth parents, relatives, caseworkers, the child, and any other extended family or community representatives with an interest in, or information about, the child.

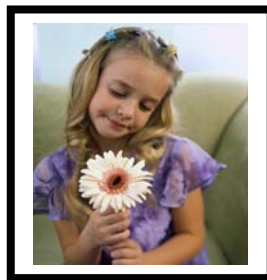
TDM meetings provide an opportunity to gather additional information about the child, the family, and issues confronting the family. The Placement Resource Unit specialist uses the information about the child to match him or her with a foster parent that will best meet the child's needs, regardless of the child placement agency. When a placement has been secured, the specialist shares the child's profile with the foster parent and foster care worker.

The information gleaned using the child profile helps to smooth the child's transition into foster care. Foster parents have better information about the child's needs, and DHS and private agency staff have more case information to assist in developing initial service plans and immediately identifying resources needed by the family.

The preliminary data on placement outcomes has been extremely positive. Seventy percent of all sibling groups, regardless of size, have been kept together with the implementation of the CPN, compared to approximately 34 percent previously. Even when a sibling group must be split under the new placement system, 96 percent of children who are part of a sibling group have been placed with at least one other sibling. Historically, about 12 percent of children were being maintained in their own neighborhood (placed in same or adjacent ZIP code). With the Children's Placement Network, this number has nearly quadrupled to 46 percent.

The Children's Placement Network is currently being used for all initial placements and all DHS replacements. Phase two, which will include all private agency re-placements, will be implemented in the near future, followed by an eventual statewide system rollout.

(Stephanie Miller is the Special Assistant to the Director of Child and Family Services, Department of Human Services, Wayne County)



----- "WE CAN HELP" -----
By Elizabeth Oliver (Board #1)

On Friday, May 12, 2006, members of the Wayne County Foster Care Review Board were recognized by the Third Circuit Court and Wayne County Commissioners for their efforts in helping to ensure that the county is able to maintain maximum federal funding for services to children in foster care who are under the court's jurisdiction due to abuse and neglect.

The ceremony, which was held in the chambers of Chief Judge Mary Beth Kelly, was in recognition and appreciation of the hundreds of hours board members volunteered in auditing approximately 500 foster care cases to verify whether court orders complied with federal regulations for federal Title IV-E funding.

Sincere words of appreciation were received from the Honorable Maura D. Corrigan, Michigan Supreme Court Justice; the Honorable Mary Beth Kelly, Chief Judge with the 3rd Circuit Court; and the Honorable Leslie Kim Smith, Family Court Judge with the 3rd Circuit Court. Forty-one Wayne County review board members received certificates of appreciation and service from both the court and the commission. An informal but very enjoyable reception followed.

Although we do not volunteer to receive accolades, the event was very meaningful, gratifying, and appreciated by those honored. Many board members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to partner with the court and our county Department of Human Services offices to help ensure adequate resources are available to care for our county and state's most vulnerable children.

As informed citizens, we pledge our continued support and willingness to assist in helping to assure timely permanency and safe passage for all children who are involved with our state's foster care system.

(Elizabeth Oliver is a pharmacist who has earned a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Detroit. She has served on the Wayne County Review Board for 17 years.)

----- CHILD WELFARE SERVICES TRAINING UPDATE -----

By Carol A. Siemon, Deputy Director

On March 23-24, 2006, SCAO-Child Welfare Services, Department of Human Services, Department of Community Health, Office of Children's Ombudsman, and Children's Charter held a conference for over 500 participants on "Mental Health Needs in Child Welfare: Addressing the Needs of Children and Families." This conference was generously funded by the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice.

The first plenary speaker was Dr. Bruce Perry, a noted expert on how a child's brain is impacted by trauma. Other plenary sessions included presentations by Judge Cindy Lederman and Dr. Joy Osofsky on "Building Mental Health and Judicial Partnerships to Help Children in the Child Welfare System," and Marva Lewis on "Cultural Competency Issues." We offered a total of 30 workshops covering a variety of topics, including "Infant Mental Health-Attachment and Bonding Issues," "Navigating the CMH System," "Adolescent Brain Functioning," "The Effects on Children Raised by a Mentally Ill Parent," "Moving Toward Evidence-Based Practice," and many others. In the future, we plan to have most of the conference notebook materials available on the Child Welfare Services website at <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/services/CWS/CWS.htm>.

An exciting footnote to the conference is that following Judge Lederman's and Dr. Osofsky's plenary presentations on the Miami-Dade Court Teams program, counties were encouraged to indicate their interest in seeking federal earmarked Zero-to-Three funds for "court teams" pilots for their local jurisdiction. Midland County, via Congressman David Camp, has submitted a request for funding to create a court teams pilot in that county. The funding bill passed the House in late June and is awaiting action in the Senate. The Department of Community Health and the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health have offered to participate in a collaborative effort to replicate this pilot across the state if Midland obtains the requisite funding.

Preliminary planning for next year's two-day conference has begun. This conference will be entitled "Addressing Substance Abuse Needs in Child Welfare" and will be held April 3-4, 2007, at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. The first planning committee meeting was held on July 19, 2006.

This summer, we are offering "Summer Series on Child Welfare Interviewing and Communication Issues" trainings. The first of three in this series of trainings was held June 30 at the East Lansing Kellogg Center on the topic of "Motivational Interviewing: Increasing the Readiness to Change for Parents Court-Ordered to Participate in Services." Michael Clark, MSW, LMSW, a consultant and presenter on child welfare, mental health, addictions, and juvenile justice issues, was the speaker.

The second training in this series was held July 25, 2006, in Sterling Heights. Entitled "Communicating with Foster Children," it focused on communications with children at the time of removal and placement and implementation of some basic procedures that will help attorneys, CPS workers, and foster care workers reduce the trauma caused to children during this same process. Rosalind Folman, PhD, discussed her research, the research of others, and the implications of how we work with children at this critical juncture.

In August, the third training in the series will focus on the topic of "Interviewing Children with Disabilities." Nora Baladerian, PhD, a psychologist noted for her expertise in this area and author of [Interviewing Skills to Use with Abuse Victims with Developmental Disabilities](#), will present on August 21 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing, August 23 at the Best Western in Gaylord, and August 25 at the Best Western in Sterling Heights.

On September 8, 2006, a best practices forum entitled "Children Absent from Court-Ordered Placement Without Legal Permission" will be held at the Hall of Justice Conference Center in Lansing. This forum will provide an opportunity to hear both local and national perspectives on the issues and practices involving children missing from care in our child welfare system and provide forum participants with information and strategies to improve delivery of services to these children and families.



(Information regarding past and future trainings may be obtained by contacting Joy Thelen, Administrative Assistant to Carol Siemon, at ThelenJ@courts.mi.gov or 517-373-5322.)

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State Court Administrative Office**

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Carol A. Siemon, J.D., Deputy Director
Joy Thelen, Administrative Assistant
Michigan Hall of Justice
925 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, MI 48909
517-373-1956

Kathy Falconello, Administrative Assistant
Cadillac Place
3034 W. Grand Blvd., Ste. 8-400
Detroit, MI 48202
313-972-3288

MICHIGAN FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD PROGRAM

Jim Novell, M.S.W., Program Manager
Brenda Baker-Mbacke', M.A., Program Representative
Toyur Mackey, M.S.W., Program Representative
Earlester Monroe, Program Assistant
Angel Pierce, Office Assistant
Cadillac Place
3034 W. Grand Blvd., Ste. 8-400
Detroit, MI 48202
313-972-3280

Gayle Robbert, M.A., Program Representative
Debra Kailie, M.S.W., Program Representative
LaRay Jones, Office Assistant
Michigan Hall of Justice
925 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, MI 48909
517-373-8729

Kevin Sherman, M.A., Program Representative
Kelly Jencks & Robin Ellis, Office Assistants
P.O. Box 9
Gaylord, MI 49735
989-732-0494